



gizzard shad

Dorosoma cepedianum

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Osteichthyes
Order:	Clupeiformes
Family:	Clupeidae

Features

The gizzard shad has a deep, oblong body that is strongly flattened side to side. A dark spot may be present on each side of the body near the gill cover. The front of the head is rounded and the snout hangs over the mouth. The last ray in the dorsal fin is very long and thin. The upper body is silver-blue changing to silver on the sides with a whitish belly. Dark stripes are present on the back and upper side. Shad commonly reach four inches in length in their first year, but the maximum size range in Iowa is nine to 14 inches.

Natural History

The gizzard shad lives in the deep, open water of rivers, lakes, and impoundments. It travels in schools near the water's surface and may leap out of the water. It eats plankton, algae, and insect larvae, feeding by filtering objects out of the water with bony extensions of its gills. It reaches maturity at two to three years of age. Spawning occurs late April

through early May. The female deposits up to 400,000 eggs that are scattered across the bottom in shallow water. The eggs are sticky and attach to the first object they touch. Eggs hatch in about four days. Gizzard shad live an average of one to four years. It is host to the immature stage of several freshwater mussel species. Shad can overpopulate small impoundments and compete with bluegill for food.

Habitats

interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; Mississippi River; Missouri River

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.